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Russia: Extent of corruption and government efforts to combat corruption, including anti-corruption legislation (2005 - June 2007)
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Extent of corruption

Reports by media, academic, governmental and non-governmental organizations portray corruption in Russia as a serious and pervasive problem (RFE/RL 24 Feb. 2006; *The Guardian* 8 Nov. 2006; PONARS Dec. 2006, 1; Freedom House 2006; US 6 Mar. 2007, Sec. 3). According to Russia's Deputy Prosecutor General Alexander Buksman, Russian bureaucrats take in approximately 125 billion British pounds (GBP) [approximately 269 billion Canadian dollars (CAD) (Bank of Canada 8 Nov. 2006)] in bribes every year: "the scale of graft was close to equalling the state's entire annual revenues" (*The Guardian* 8 Nov. 2006).

Following the 17 February 2006 ratification by the Russian Duma (lower house of Parliament) of the United Nations Convention Against Corruption, Duma Deputy Speaker Vladimir Pekhtin noted that corruption was so extensive that [translation] "some unscrupulous officials see their positions as a source of bribes" (NEWSru.com 17 Feb. 2006). The same day, Russian Interior Minister Rashid Nurgaliev stated that corruption posed a threat to the country's national security, adding that in 2005, his ministry had investigated 34,500 cases of [translation] "crimes against the state, the authorities and the public service," a 17 percent increase when compared to 2004 figures (ibid.). According to Deputy Prosecutor-General Aleksandr Buksman, 28,000 cases of corruption were identified by investigators in the first eight months of 2006 (*The Guardian* 8 Nov. 2006).

Citing Transparency International (TI), *The Guardian* reports that there has been a 700 percent increase in corruption since 2001 (8 Nov. 2006). TI's *Corruption Perceptions Index 2006* ranked Russia in 121st place out of 163 countries evaluated by business people and country analysts; on a scale of 0 (highly corrupt) to 10 (highly clean), Russia earned a score of 2.5 (2006a).

In a December 2006 policy memo, the Program on New Approaches to Russian Security (PONARS), a network of scholars associated with the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) in Washington, DC (PONARS, N.d.), notes that while bribes are down in number, the sums involved are increasing. (ibid., Dec. 2006, 1) PONARS adds that corruption tends to be heavier in Russia's

major cities, where public servants are found in relatively large numbers (ibid., 2).

According to the *Report on the Transparency International Global Corruption Barometer 2006*, eight percent of respondents admitted that they or another person in their household had paid a bribe in the past year (TI 2006b, 18). In April 2006, Agence France-Presse (AFP) cited a poll by Russia's Levada Center, an independent Russian research center (*The New York Times* 17 Nov. 2006), which found that 29 percent of respondents across Russia had paid a bribe in the previous five years (AFP 24 Apr. 2006).

The *International Narcotics Control Strategy Report*, published by the United States Department of State in March 2007, states that "[i]nadequate budgets, low salaries, and a lack of technical resources" are among the factors that "encourage corruption."

Sectors affected by corruption

Bribes are frequently paid to ensure placement in educational institutions, to obtain a driver's licence, to secure medical treatment (*The Guardian* 8 Nov. 2006; *Toronto Star* 23 Dec. 2006; *The Independent* 1 Mar. 2007) or to avoid military service (ibid.). Additionally, Russian businesses reportedly allocate up to ten percent of their revenues to pay bribes (*The Guardian* 8 Nov. 2006). In an article by *The Guardian*, Russia's Deputy Prosecutor General Alexander Buksman is reported to have said that more than 9,000 cases of bribery were brought to light by investigators in the first eight months of 2006 (ibid.).

According to Oleg Safonov, Russian Deputy Minister of Internal Affairs, corruption in Russia figures prominently in the real estate, municipal services and education sectors (*Rossiskaya Gazeta* 31 Jan. 2007). Safonov notes that in 2006, thousands of criminal investigations were launched in connection with allegations that officials had embezzled budget money that in many cases had been earmarked for national projects; for example, in 2006, 1,912 people were arrested in the agro-industrial sector, 759 in the construction sector, 1,149 in the education sector and 880 in the healthcare sector (ibid.).

In May 2006, the Russian Information Agency (RIA) Novosti cited Prosecutor General Vladimir Ustinov as stating that "'organized crime more often than not involves state and law-enforcement bodies,'" and that customs checkpoints in particular had been heavily infiltrated by criminal groups (15 May 2006).

In 2006, according to *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2006*, some elements of Russian law enforcement cooperated with human traffickers and, in a number of cases, actually controlled trafficking (US 6 Mar. 2007, Sec. 5). This information could not be corroborated among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate.

The *Report on the Transparency International Global Corruption Barometer 2006* found that on a scale of one to five, where one is "not at all corrupt" and 5 is "extremely corrupt," respondents gave Russian police a rating of 4.0 and the legal system and judiciary a rating of 3.9 (TI 2006b, 22). *The Moscow Times* cited a February 2007 poll by the Levada Center that found that 48 percent of Russians consider traffic police corrupt (1 Mar. 2007).

On 12 May 2006, several senior security officers from the Federal Security Service (Federal'noe Sluzhba Bezopasnosti, FSB), the Federal Customs Service (ibid.; RFE/RL 2 June 2006), the Interior Ministry and the Prosecutor-General's Office were dismissed because of alleged involvement in corruption (ibid.; see also *Kommersant Daily* 14 Sept. 2006); however, some critics such as the Director of the Information Science for Democracy Foundation (INDEM) felt that these dismissals were politically motivated (RFE/RL 2 June 2006). On 21 November 2006, RIA Novosti quoted Russian Prosecutor General Yuri Chaika as stating that Russian authorities caught 12,500 corrupt officials and 9,500 bribery cases thus far in 2006, and that 2,000 people were convicted for bribery in the first six months of that year. A few days later, the Moscow-based business daily *Vedomosti* reported information from RIA Novosti that two former Moscow prosecutors had been sentenced to four years imprisonment for accepting a USD 10,000 bribe (27 Nov. 2006).

Anti-corruption legislation

While Russian legislation does not distinguish corruption as a special category (ITAR-TASS 3 Apr. 2007), the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation does punish extortion (Russia 13 June 1996, Art. 163) and bribery (ibid., Art. 290-291). The maximum penalty for extortion committed under aggravating circumstances is a fine of one million roubles [approximately CAD 44,500 (Bank of Canada 2 Apr. 2007)] or five years' income, accompanied by a prison sentence of fifteen years (Russia 13 June 1996, Art. 163). The most serious forms of bribe-taking are punishable by twelve years of imprisonment and a fine of one million roubles or five years' income (Russia 13 June 1996, Art. 290), while bribe-giving can be punished with up to eight years of incarceration and a fine of five-hundred thousand roubles or three years' income (ibid., Art. 291).

On 17 February 2006, the Duma ratified the United Nations Convention against Corruption (RFE/RL 24 Feb. 2006). In October 2006, the State Duma Anti-Corruption Commission, the Council of Europe and the European Commission announced a joint initiative to develop legislation and other measures to fight corruption, particularly in the areas of public procurement, education and health (COE 10 Oct. 2006).

Government anti-corruption efforts

According to an expert on corruption at Transparency International-Russia, units for combating internal corruption exist in most law enforcement, security and defence agencies (Global Integrity 2006, indicator 65). In 2006, Global Integrity indicated that the principal agencies fighting corruption in Russia are the FSB and the Prosecutor-General's Office (ibid.).

In March 2007, *The Independent* reported that the government had launched a new anti-corruption drive in Russia and planned to set up special anti-corruption units in all public offices, create a network of informers in the public service, install anti-corruption hotlines for the public and educate public servants by having them attend ethics classes (1 March 2007). In addition, closed-circuit cameras will be installed in public offices to prevent bribe-taking (*The Independent* 1 Mar. 2007; *The Moscow Times* 1 March 2007).

Global Integrity notes that the General Prosecutor's Office, as well as other Russian law enforcement agencies, have been accused of prosecuting cases of corruption "on a selective basis - either against low-level officials, or motivated

for political reasons" (2006, indicator 75d). In its 2006 report on Russia, Freedom House suggests that a plan announced in 2005 to double the salaries of federal public servants working outside Moscow by 2008 will not reduce corruption significantly, since these salaries will still be much lower than in the private sector.

Similarly, *Country Reports 2006* states that the Russian judiciary was "susceptible to corruption" in 2006, despite recent increases' in judges' salaries (US 6 Mar. 2007, Sec. 1.e). In connection with this corruption, it was reported that in the first six months of 2006, 39 judges were reportedly dismissed and 151 received a warning (ibid.).

In the *Report on the Transparency International Global Corruption Barometer 2006*, it was revealed that more than three-quarters of the Russians surveyed considered the government's fight against corruption to be ineffective or even, in some cases, counterproductive (TI 2006b, 20). A January 2007 poll by the Levada Center revealed that 54 percent of Russians felt that the level of corruption in Russia had not improved since the administration of Boris Yeltsin in the 1990s, while 26 felt that corruption had decreased [Angus Reid 23 Jan. 2007]. Agence France-Presse (AFP) quotes the INDEM Foundation as stating that 3,600 guilty verdicts were passed and 502 people imprisoned for corruption in 2005, "out of an estimated 39 million cases of corruption," but these figures were contested by an official of the interior ministry (31 Oct. 2006). Further or corroborating information about these numbers could not be found by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

This Response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research Directorate within time constraints. This Response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim for refugee protection. Please find below the list of additional sources consulted in researching this Information Request.

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